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Letter dated 17 November 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that, as President of the Security Council for the month of November 2017, Italy has scheduled an open debate on 21 November on the theme "Maintenance of international peace and security: trafficking in persons in conflict situations".

Italy has prepared the concept note transmitted herewith (see annex). I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Sebastiano **Cardi**
Ambassador

17-20348 (E) 201117

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Annex to the letter dated 17 November 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept note for the Security Council ministerial open debate on the theme "Maintenance of international peace and security: trafficking in persons in conflict situations", to be held on 21 November 2017

An increase in the number of victims of human trafficking and in patterns of exploitation by terrorist groups and organized crime has led the United Nations and its Member States to take action. Moreover, the extended geographical scope of the scourge is a matter of deep concern.

Acknowledging the complex nature of human trafficking, with specific reference to its recurrence in situations of conflict and international crisis, in December 2015, the Security Council held its first thematic briefing on trafficking in persons in situations of conflict. In the statement by the President of the Security Council adopted on that occasion (S/PRST/2015/25), the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to report to the Council 12 months thereafter on the progress made in countering trafficking in persons through existing mechanisms. On the basis of the consequent report of the Secretary-General (S/2016/949), the Council held a ministerial open debate on 20 December 2016 on trafficking in persons in conflict situations and adopted resolution 2331 (2016) unanimously.

Attesting to its increasing attention to the topic, the Security Council held a ministerial open debate on the theme "Trafficking in persons in conflict situations: forced labour, slavery and other similar practices" on 15 March 2017.

Experience has shown beyond any doubt that armed conflict and humanitarian crises amplify the risk for people to fall prey to traffickers, in particular for the most vulnerable persons, namely women, children, refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons. The dual nature of human trafficking as both a cause and a consequence of conflict and instability has been widely recognized, as has its increasingly worrisome link to terrorist groups' activities and transnational organized crime. That connection has been confirmed in a number of recent reports, including the above-mentioned report on trafficking in persons in conflict situations, the report of the Secretary-General on trafficking in persons in armed conflict pursuant to Security Council resolution 2331 (2016) (S/2017/939), the most recent global report on trafficking in persons of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, published in December 2016, and the reports of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children (A/HRC/32/41 and A/HRC/32/41/Corr.1 and A/71/303).

As highlighted in those documents, the purpose of trafficking in persons in areas affected by humanitarian crises, armed conflict and post-conflict situations can include various forms of exploitation, including sexual exploitation, forced labour, the removal of organs, slavery and similar practices. Trafficking is also used as a tactic of terror by some terrorist groups, including Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as Da'esh), Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab and the Lord's Resistance Army. In addition to representing a serious violation of human rights, which, in conflict situations, may also constitute war crimes and, in other specific circumstances, crimes against humanity, human trafficking has become a critical source of financing for terrorist groups and transnational crime networks.

Implementation of Security Council resolution 2331 (2016)

In adopting resolution 2331 (2016) in December 2016, the Security Council fully recognized the connection among trafficking in persons, sexual violence, terrorist groups and transnational organized crime, and the urgency of curbing illicit financial flows relating to those activities.

A clear interconnection also exists between trafficking in persons and large movements of migrants and refugees.

The vulnerability of persons in conflict situations and post-conflict situations to various forms of exploitation associated with human trafficking has also been acknowledged, with a special focus placed on sexual violence against women and girls, children in armed conflict and persons displaced by armed conflict, including refugees.

In that light, in resolution 2331 (2016), Member States were called upon to not only adopt a robust victim-centred approach, but also hold accountable those responsible for such crimes by criminalizing their activities and prosecuting them. For that purpose, the Security Council called upon Member States to ratify or accede to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and to fully implement them, through tailored national strategies and enhanced international cooperation.

Moreover, the Security Council urged the various components of the United Nations system to work together in a more integrated manner in order to counter human traffickers and disrupt their networks effectively, by, inter alia, expressing the intention to invite the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to brief the sanctions committees, inviting Member States to provide specific training to all peacekeeping personnel to be deployed to United Nations peace operations, incorporating the risk of human trafficking into humanitarian response strategies and activities and strengthening the assessment of financial flows relating to trafficking through existing mechanisms and bodies, namely the Financial Action Task Force and Task Force-style regional bodies.

As requested in resolution 2331 (2016), in his report, the Secretary-General presented options for underpinning the efforts of the Security Council, its subsidiary bodies, United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions and United Nations agencies to combat trafficking in persons while also minimizing the risk of contributing to it through procurement and supply chains.

Questions for discussion

Considering the full toolkit that the United Nations has at its disposal to eradicate the scourge of trafficking in persons, the Secretary-General, in his briefing, offered the Security Council the opportunity to consider the following questions:

(a) How to better match the capacity to uncover human trafficking networks and trace related financial flows to the planning and implementation of countering strategies, for instance, by making full strategic use of the data collection, analysis and technical assistance provided by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and by fostering cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in that area;

(b) How to ensure the coherence and consistency of the United Nations system and the actions of Member States throughout the "peace continuum" in

tackling human trafficking- and organized crime-related activities in conflict, humanitarian crises and post-conflict situations;

(c) In line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the sustaining peace agenda, how to mainstream human trafficking-related considerations more effectively into the wider spectrum of United Nations action aimed at addressing the root causes of poverty and human rights violations and at sustaining peace and security;

(d) How to ensure the provision of enhanced and effective humanitarian, legal and financial aid to victims of trafficking, and the fullest involvement in that endeavour of civil society, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, including in the countries of destination of victims of trafficking;

(e) How to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations system on the ground to prevent, identify, address and fight human trafficking;

(f) How to encourage Member States and better assist them in acceding to and fully implementing relevant international instruments, including the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its protocols, in particular its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and in improving cooperation in the field of international law enforcement;

(g) Human trafficking and smuggling thrive on conflict and instability because they take advantage of undermined State authority. To what extent do the activities of traffickers and smugglers counter the efforts to uphold the authority of the State and advance political solutions to crises? How do trafficking and smuggling affect the political dynamics in the countries concerned? How do they affect the social fabric in the countries concerned, and how can local stakeholders be mobilized to face and address the challenges that they present?

Format

The format of the meeting is that of an open ministerial debate of the Security Council under the presidency of Italy.

Outcome

A draft resolution to follow up on Security Council resolution 2331 (2016) has been proposed and is under consideration.

Briefers

- The Secretary-General
- The Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
- The Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, Maria Grazia Giammarinaro